



**NATIONAL SURVEY  
OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES  
FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES**

[www.icprwb.org](http://www.icprwb.org)

from the INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN, POVERTY, AND HOMELESSNESS

**Wisconsin had an estimated 1,108 homeless families on a single night in 2009, with providers serving nearly four times their bed capacity over the course of the year.<sup>1</sup> This brief summarizes the state's public and private initiatives to assist these families.**

### State Taskforce on Homelessness

**Taskforce:** The Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness (established by executive order in 2004) has been inactive since 2007. The council developed the state's plan to end chronic homelessness and disbanded upon the plan's approval.

**Governor's Appointee:** Nina Carlson, Policy Advisor to the Governor, has analyzed proposed homeless policies for the governor since 2007.



### Demographic Summary and Overview of Regional Organization

	Wisconsin	Milwaukee <sup>2</sup>	Dane County
Persons in homeless families <sup>3</sup>	3,364	563	293
Number of family shelter beds <sup>4</sup>	3,551	692	235
Persons in homeless families (per 10,000 population in families) <sup>5</sup>	17	16	17
Percent of families in poverty <sup>6</sup>	11.78%	20.69%	7.76%
10-Year plan date approved or implemented	2007	2010 <sup>7</sup>	2006
10-Year plan target population	All	All	All
Point-in-time count frequency	Annually*	Annually	Annually
Point-in-time count managing agency	Wisconsin Department of Commerce*	Milwaukee Continuum of Care	City of Madison Planning and Community and Economic Development Department
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managing agency	Wisconsin Department of Commerce*	Wisconsin Department of Commerce	Wisconsin Department of Commerce
Continuum of Care (CoC) lead applicant or main organizing agency	Wisconsin Department of Commerce*	Community Advocates	Dane County Homeless Services Consortium

\*Corresponds to the Balance of State Continuum of Care, which comprises areas of Wisconsin that are not included in a regional or local CoC.

### Statewide Data Collection and Usage

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce manages Wisconsin ServicePoint (WISP), the state's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Started in 2001, WISP collects data on all homeless persons who access shelters funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). By 2003, HUD selected WISP as a model for local HMIS implementation for its use of incentives in grant applications to quickly achieve high participation rates.<sup>8</sup> WISP currently covers 87% of emergency shelter beds, 90% of transitional housing beds, and 93% of permanent supportive housing beds in Wisconsin.<sup>9</sup> These rates are higher than the national averages of 62%, 63%, and 70%, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce uses WISP data to measure the impact of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), a one-time federal funding source disbursed in Wisconsin starting August 2009. The department compared emergency shelter stays in the first six months of the

**ICPH**  
Institute for  
Children, Poverty  
& Homelessness  
[www.icpny.org](http://www.icpny.org)

The *National Survey of Programs and Services for Homeless Families* is an online resource for service providers, advocates, researchers, and public policy makers working in the field of family homelessness. The Web site provides a state-by-state snapshot of the interconnections between governmental and nonprofit work to end family homelessness. For additional information on Wisconsin and other states visit [www.icprwb.org](http://www.icprwb.org)

years 2009 and 2010 for both families and individuals. Between 2009 and 2010, the number of persons in families staying in emergency shelters decreased 8.6%, while homeless individuals increased 3.9%. The department attributes most of the decrease in family shelter stays to the availability and use of HPRP funds.<sup>11</sup>

### Nationally Recognized Education Programs in Wisconsin

In 2004, 2006, and 2007, Wisconsin school districts won the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Award for Outstanding School-Based Education Program.<sup>12</sup> The Madison Metropolitan School District, the 2004 winner, was recognized as one of the few programs that has several staff members dedicated to homeless students district-wide, instead of targeting schools located near homeless shelters.<sup>13</sup>

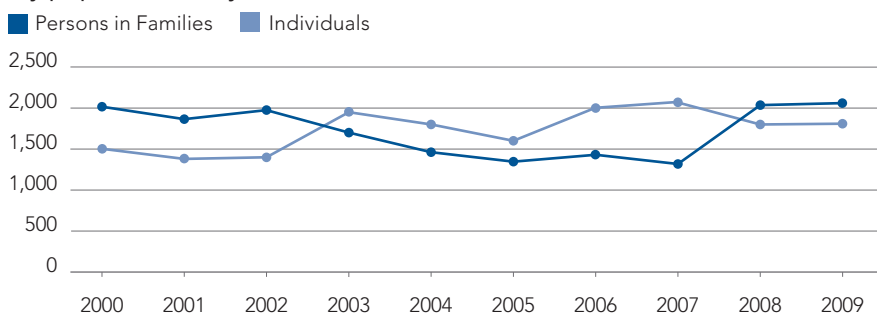
The Classroom, the 2006 recipient, is an after-school tutoring program for children in kindergarten through high school offered at the Shalom Center, an emergency family shelter. This collaboration with the Kenosha Unified School District is now Wisconsin's model for after-school education programs for homeless children. The program uses one-on-one instruction and individualized daily lesson plans to help children achieve academic parity with their housed peers.<sup>14</sup>

The Wisconsin Rapids School District, the 2007 winner, received recognition for comprehensively addressing homelessness issues. The program enrolled over 26 staff members in a course entitled Understanding the Culture of Poverty in the 2005–06 school year. In addition, the Hopes and Dreams project promotes communication between students, parents, and teachers by having homeless students and their parents share social and academic aspirations for the upcoming school year.<sup>15</sup>

### Overflowing Needs in Dane County

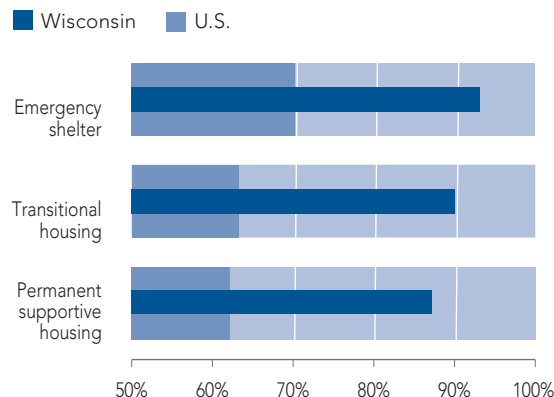
In Dane County, the number of homeless families accessing emergency shelter has surpassed individuals in recent years. In 2008, the Salvation Army of Dane County, the area's single point-of-entry for families seeking shelter, converted its winter Warming House to a year-round family overflow shelter. Demand, however, has continued to increase. The number of shelter nights provided to persons in families doubled from 2,069 in 2008 to 4,366 in 2009. Average length of stay per family increased, from 3.5 nights for the 190 families with 361 children served in 2008 to 5.9 nights for the 228 families with 450 children served in 2009. In addition, the number of persons in families turned away more than tripled from 238 in 2008 to 836 in 2009.<sup>16</sup>

### Number of Persons Served in Emergency Shelters in Dane County (by population and year)



Source: Sue Wallinger to Homeless Services Consortium Members, memorandum, April 9, 2010, 2009 Year End Data and Previous Years End Data Comparisons, City of Madison Planning and Community and Economic Development Department.

### Percent of Beds Covered by HMIS (by shelter type)



Source: Adam L. Smith (HMIS Director, Wisconsin Department of Commerce), interview with ICPH, August 2010; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2009 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *AHAR Exchange Public Reports: 2009 Comprehensive Report of Sheltered Homeless Persons*.

<sup>2</sup>Statistics for Milwaukee include Milwaukee County.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2009 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2009 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report*.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2009 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey.

<sup>7</sup>Milwaukee's plan has been approved by the county government and is awaiting approval at the city level; Joe Volk (Executive Director, Community Advocates), interview with ICPH, August 2010.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *What Works in Partnership Building for HMIS*, April 30, 2003.

<sup>9</sup>Adam L. Smith (HMIS Director, Wisconsin Department of Commerce), interview with ICPH, August 2010.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report*.

<sup>11</sup>Adam L. Smith (HMIS Director, Wisconsin Department of Commerce), interview with ICPH, August 2010.

<sup>12</sup>National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, "2004 NAEHCY Awards: Final Results," *The Beam* 14, no. 2 (2004): 2; National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, "NAEHCY Annual Awards," *The Beam* (Winter 2007): 4–5; National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, "NAEHCY Annual Awards: 2007 NAEHCY Awards Recipients," [http://www.naehcy.org/conf/awards\\_2007.html](http://www.naehcy.org/conf/awards_2007.html)

<sup>13</sup>Kelliann Blazek, Jamie Fisher, and Sarah Karon, "Madison's Transition Education Program gets homeless kids in school," (*Madison, WI*) *Daily Page*, February 8, 2010.

<sup>14</sup>Jessica Stephen, "At home in 'The Classroom,'" *Kenosha News*, December 1, 2009.

<sup>15</sup>National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, "2007 NAEHCY Awards Recipients," [http://www.naehcy.org/conf/awards\\_2007.html](http://www.naehcy.org/conf/awards_2007.html)

<sup>16</sup>Sue Wallinger to Homeless Services Consortium Members, memorandum, April 9, 2010, *2009 Year End Data and Previous Years End Data Comparisons*, City of Madison Planning and Community and Economic Development Department.